

**PERSONAL  
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MONOGRAPH**

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**OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT  
A HISTORY OF JTF --  
A LOGISTICAL OPERATION**

BY

**COLONEL WARNER T. FERGUSON, JR.**  
United States Army



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# **OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT**

## **A HISTORY OF JTF-A LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS**

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**ARMY WAR COLLEGE**

**CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA**

**MAY 1992**

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## INTRODUCTION

During Operation Desert Storm, Proven Force and Provide Comfort, I was the J-4, Special Forces Operations Command Europe, (SOCEUR) commanded by Brigadier General Richard Potter. Special Operations Command Europe deployed as part of Joint Task Force Proven Force, Incirlik, Turkey, which operated from 9 January 1991 to 22 March 1991. On 6 April 1991, Headquarters SOCEUR was alerted for participation in Operation Provide Comfort with the mission to provide humanitarian support to the Kurds in northern Iraq and southern Turkey. Other reports on Operation Provide Comfort have focused on the JTF force composition, mission, and operational concept. The objective of this personal experience monograph is to provide insight into the logistical operations and staff relationships of JTF-A during Operation Provide Comfort, 7 April 1991 through 17 June 1991. The views presented in this paper are the logistical perspective of how SOCEUR supported Operation Provide Comfort.

## DEPLOYMENT

The European based Headquarters, SOCEUR, 7th Special Operations Support Command, 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, and the 39th Special Operations Wing were immediately deployed by air to Incirlik, Turkey for support of the humanitarian relief efforts. Deployment started on 6 April 1991, with the first air drop of supplies, a modest amount of 27 tons,

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conducted on 7 April 1992. The Headquarters, 10th Special Forces Group, and their 2nd and 3rd Battalions, Fort Devens, MA. were subsequently tasked and assigned to the JTF in support of Provide Comfort. The SF battalions were given areas of operations in which to work, each area containing several refugee camps. All troops and associated equipment deployments were accomplished by military airlift. Most redeploying units were in the process of unpacking equipment from the redeployment from Desert Storm/Proven Force. In some cases this proved helpful because only minor modifications were required to the airloaded pallets prior to the return trip to Turkey.

All SOCEUR forces entered the area of operations through Incirlik, Turkey. The usual customs requirements were waved for SOCEUR units because they had just departed Turkey. This enhanced the speed of the deployment operation by not stopping every pallet and piece of equipment as it entered the country. As time progressed and the overall size of the operation grew, the Turkish government reinstituted the usual customs requirements of accounting for every item that came into the country on an entry inventory. The inventory had to match what came off the aircraft or ship, if not, many days delay could be expected to complete an accurate inventory. The same inventory was to be used on the return trip. If the entry inventories did not match the departure inventories, delays could be expected up to a week. SOCEUR's units came into country under the less restrictive system and were allowed to depart under the same



system. Close coordination between SOCEUR J-4 and the Turkish customs agents prevented many problems experienced by other units both during deployment and redeployment. Prior working relationships with Turkish customs during Proven Force also aided during Provide Comfort.

Airlift requirements for European bases units were entered into the Joint Deployment System (JDS) by SOCEUR at Patch Barracks, Germany. Units from CONUS entered the JDS from their home station. The deployment and redeployment of SOCEUR forces during Provide Comfort was accomplished quickly and in a routine manner.

The SOCEUR staff relocated to the previously occupied building that it used during Proven Force. Other SOCEUR units were located in areas close to their previous headquarters. All areas were satisfactory for the operation. Different missions were assigned the Provide Comfort participants which dictated some changes in facilities requirements.

#### LOGISTICAL MISSION

The logistical mission of Operation Provide Comfort JTF-A was to provide life sustaining logistical support to the Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq and southern Turkey. This mission had many implied tasks which, once analyzed, required a very large support structure to accomplish all aspects of the operation. Every type of logistical support that could be imagined was



applied to assist in the survival of the Kurds in the numerous refugee camps. The support included providing water, both making, storage and distribution of the produced and bottled water. Other support included clothing, blankets, water jugs, pots/pans, shoes, shovels, tarps, tents, medical supplies, Meals, Ready-to-Eat (MRE), bulk food, fuel for cooking(coal/charcoal) cooking oil, vehicle fuel, and oil. In the later phases of the operation, during the Kurds return to their homes, maintenance support teams were provided at specific locations to start the abandoned vehicles left by the Kurds retreat into the mountains. This aspect of support will be discussed later in the paper.

The other major logistical mission of the operation was the significant internal support required to provide for the joint and multinational forces participating from many different locations. Base support at Incirlik was provided by the existing base facilities augmented by a large contingent of Air Force Prime Beef personnel and Harvest Eagle/Falcon field housing sets. Prime Beef base support operations were also established at Silopi, Diyarbakir and Yuksekova. In this paper, the majority of discussion will center around JTF- A operations from Incirlik to the Humanitarian Services Support Bases (HSSB) at Silopi and Yuksekova.

#### **STAFF COORDINATION**

EUCOM established a Combined Task Force(CTF) Provide Comfort, commanded by MG Jamerson,USAF. SOCEUR established the second staff, known as Joint Task Force(JTF), later to become JTF-A.



Both staffs consisted of J-1 through J-6. The major difference in the two staffs was the SOCEUR,(JTF), staff works as a deployable unit where the CTF staff was made up of persons from many different units. The staff personnel were taken primarily from EUCOM, U.S. Army, Europe, and U.S. Air Force, Europe.

Other subordinate units to these organizations also provided filler personnel to the CTF staff. Very few of Proven Force staff were called back for CTF Provide Comfort staff. The CTF staff, therefore, had the usual difficulties with organization and forming a new team, all during a situation when any wasted time could cost lives. The JTF staff on the other hand, had only two weeks between its departure from Incirlik and return. This aided greatly in smooth transition into country and focus on the required mission.

The CTF and JTF were located in the same headquarters on Incirlik Air Base which eased potential confusion. CTF had the job of getting the supplies into country, rigging the supplies for air drop directly into the refugee camps and moving supplies to the forward HSSBs. JTF-A had the job of establishing HSSBs, moving supplies by air and ground to the refugee camps, distribution of survival supplies within the camps and moving the refugees out of the mountain camps to the newly established camps. This initial clear division of responsibility made it easy to coordinate logistical activities. The CTF was also responsible for organizing the Air Force Prime Beef base support at each of the HSSBs and other support operations.



Daily coordination meetings were held between CTF and JTF J-4 staffs to pass new requirements and followup on past actions. These meetings were the heart of the logistical coordination operations and insured things happened quickly.

As the Provide Comfort mission grew, it was obvious that a larger operation would be required to successfully assist the Kurds in their survival. A second ground force was brought in to perform a security mission in northern Iraq. This task force was named JTF B and the original Special Forces JTF was redesignated JTF A. LTC Shalikashvili, USAREUR Deputy Commander, was placed in command of CTF, with the previous commander, MG Jamerson, as the deputy. The organization now had three separate staffs; CTF, JTF A and JTF B.

JTF B entered country through Incirlik and established a small liaison cell with CTF. The liaison cell consisted primarily of operators with few logisticians on hand to coordinate arrival operations. The lack of those initial logisticians required others to assist the units into country, establish transportation priorities, work aircraft schedules and establish priorities of units and equipment. This additional effort required to bring JTF-B onboard put a strain on the already stretched JTF-A staff and detracted from the mission at hand. Because of this staffing situation, onward movement of forces into the JTF B area of operation was not as smooth as possible. Both CTF and JTF A staffs provided as much assistance as possible to JTF B J-4 during deployment and redeployment



operations.

Logistical communication support was provided by the Air Force 1st Combat Communications Squadron and the Special Forces Signal Detachment. The communications links were difficult to maintain because of the great distances and numerous customers. The systems were varied and adequate to pass required logistical reports to and from the HSSBs to the main operations base at Incirlik. The signal operators performed superbly under difficult and demanding circumstances.

#### CONCEPT OF LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS

The initial phase of the operation was to air drop as much life sustaining supplies to the fleeing Kurds as possible. Initial difficulty was met in determining where the Kurdish refugee camps were located and how many persons were in each camp. The first drops were in the vicinity of the camps and distribution was made by the ones that got there first.

The basic concept of the logistical operations was to get as much food and life sustaining support in to the camps as possible. Air drop was the only means initially possible, however was only able to provide a small portion of the support requirements.

Phase I of the operation was the airdrop support conducted out of Incirlik Air Base using C-130 aircraft and airdrop bundles rigged at Incirlik. This operation was to initially concentrate



on the largest camps and move to the smallest. All camps were to be provided support. Much initial confusion existed in the camps during early airdrops because of starvation and cold conditions that existed at 6,000ft plus altitudes. All of the mountain camps still had snow on the ground and night temperatures dropped well below freezing. Several over zealous Kurds were killed during the first airdrops because they tried to catch the 500 lb. bundles before they hit the ground. Word quickly got around and this practice stopped.

During phase I, Army Special Forces and Air Force PJs aided by Air Force Combat Control Teams were working their way to the refugee camps. The Special Forces (SF) mission was to organize the refugee camps to allow for efficient distribution of supplies, establish sanitary conditions, provide medical aid, provide local security, eliminate starvation and report requirements for further logistical support.

Phase II was the transition from fixed wing airdrop to helicopter resupply operations from forward HSSBs located at Silopi and Yuksekova, Turkey. More supplies could be delivered by helicopter from HSSB to the camps, more accurately and to exact locations. Two HSSBs were established to support JTF A logistical operations in the refugee camps. The first HSSB was established at Silopi, approximately 3 miles north of Iraq, and the second established two weeks later at a remote site on the high plains of Hakkari Province, near the small town of Yuksekova.



During this phase, supplies were sent from Incirlik, Iskenderun and Van, Turkey by ground transportation to the HSSBs. The plan was to establish large concentrations of humanitarian supplies at each HSSB location and move it to the camps by helicopter and truck.

Phase I, fixed wing, was only to continue to those refugee camps unaccessible by helicopter. The goal of Phase II was to establish full service by helicopter and eliminate airdrop operations. There was a period during the transition between phases where both fixed and rotary wing operations were conducted to the camps. The air traffic managers were kept busy controlling operations because of the danger the two types of operations in the same area. Fixed wing operations were quickly stopped as soon as the HSSBs were operational.

Phase III was to provide supplies directly from ports or HSSBs to the camps by ground transportation, eliminating the need for helicopter and airdrop operations. This required finding adequate roads capable of sustaining at least 5 ton truck traffic. Bad road conditions, snow, melting snow and lack of desire by Turkish truckers to move supplies along such dangerous roads in areas controlled, for the most part, by the Kurdish military made this part of the operation difficult. Phase III planning was started just after Phase I got under way. By the time Phase III started, the majority of the problems had been solved.



## PLANNING REQUIREMENTS FOR HSSBS

The initial planning for establishment of HSSBs was conducted between the CTF, JTF, 10th SFG and the 7th SOSC. The plan was to send the 10th SFG Headquarters into the first HSSB, to be established at Silopi, Turkey, and expand operations as appropriate. The 7th Special Operations Support Command (7th SOSC) USAREUR, was deployed as the headquarters to support the internal operations of the 10th SFG. The 7th SOSC has no organic units and depends on USAREUR for units. Elements of the 66th Maintenance Battalion, a 21st TAACOM asset, were attached to the 7th SOSC to perform supply, maintenance and any other functions appropriate in support of humanitarian operations. The same units and command relationships were established during Provide Comfort as during Proven Force between 7th SOSC and USAREUR units. At this point in the planning process, it became quite obvious that the logistical support requirements far out stripped the capabilities and assets assigned to JTF-A. LtCol Wisneiowski, EUCOM J-4, had been called from the EUCOM J-4 staff to assist me in the organization process, then run the initial support operations from the first HSSB, Silopi. LtCol Wisneiowski and I organized the initial HSSB external support operations staff and functions very much along the same structure of a Support Operations Section of an Army heavy division Forward Support Battalion. The 10th SFG and 7th SOSC had the staff necessary to provide internal support, less base operations but not staffed or



equipped to run external support operations. The portion missing was external support to coordinate and move the tremendous external supply requirements. Once the HSSB external support staff and operational requirements were established and validated, they were placed in the JDS system for fill. These requirements went to USAREUR and USAFE. Since the majority of the position requirements were suited for Army personnel by MOS, USAREUR filled 75% of the requirements. USAFE filled three of the personnel requirements. Due to the needs of CTF J-4 staff, one of the three Air Force persons was assigned to that headquarters rather than to the HSSBs. There was a requirement for 28 staff personnel at the first HSSB and 23 at the second HSSB. Requirements existed for materiel handling equipment, fork lifts and 5 to 10 ton cranes at each HSSB. Many of the warehouse type forklifts were provided by the Air Force from within Turkey. Problems developed with the need and availability of rough terrain forklifts. The Air Force had limited quantities in Turkey and the Army had sent most to South West Asia in support of Desert Storm. The Air Force did send as many as were available in Turkey to support Provide Comfort Operations, however not enough. Once it was apparent that insufficient MHE and personnel existed in the European theater, requirements for MHE, MHE operators, fuel handlers, helicopter refueling equipment/ personnel, air traffic controllers, supply handlers and equipment riggers and were submitted to JCS for fill from world wide assets. Two Marine Landing Support Companies from



Okinawa were tasked for equipment and personnel to provide logistical handling support to CTF and JTF-A. The Marines and their equipment were deployed via air to Incirlik, Turkey to perform the refugee supply handling requirements at the two initial HSSB under control of JTF-A. During the same time personnel from USAREUR and USAFE were slowly deploying into Turkey to fill the Support Operations sections of each of the HSSB external operations. All of the tasking actions took place during the week of 15-19 April 90 and fill continued through 30 April 91. The majority of the Marine Landing support Companies were in Turkey by the end of April 1991. The support requirements changed considerably as the Kurdish refugee populations shifted. Assets which had been planned for one area were often rerouted because of new pressing mission requirements. The situation during the initial planning and execution stages was hectic and conducted with limited resources. The next discussion will focus on the HSSBs established at Silopi and Yuksekova, Turkey.

The overall operation grew very quickly and moved in many directions. As the discussion develops the logistical situation at each of the HSSB, units and their roles will be introduced in the order in which they arrived in theater. This will assist in understanding how the roles and missions shifted. It is also important to note that many of the initial units deployed in support of Provide Comfort were not performing their specific unit missions. All persons in the initial deployment were in a



frantic battle to save as many lives as possible and, in the process, performing any and all missions necessary to accomplish this goal. Frustration occasionally developed in this process between the staffs of JTF-A and the later deploying USAREUR logistical staffs because of the perceived lack of speed of operations of the later deploying units. Further discussions will focus on missions and the staffs and units performing those missions at the two JTF-A HSSBs.

#### LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FROM SILOPI

It became quite obvious that refugee supply operations could not be all conducted from the headquarters at Incirlik Air Base. The decision was made by Generals Potter and Jamerson to establish an initial HSSB at Silopi, Turkey which was located about three miles north of Iraq and within helicopter range of most of the mountain refugee camps. It was also on one of the only roads into Iraq large enough to move large quantities of supplies. Silopi had two large pilgrim complexes on the route to Mecca, one new and one quite old. The original site surveys were conducted by Colonel Swartz (SOCEUR CoS), representatives from the 39th SOW, 10th SFG and The U.S. Logistics Operations Group (TUSLOG) Turkey.

It is important to note that TUSLOG played an invaluable role in contractor, translator, transportation and military specialty personnel support. It was their initial coordination with local



Turkish officials, vendors, truck drivers and numerous other local national organizations that made the operation successful.

The first site selected was the new pilgrim complex which had a relatively modern six story hotel and several smaller buildings appropriate for housing several hundred refugees. There was a limited water source and electricity. The alternate site selected was the old pilgrim complex which had no good operational water source, limited electricity, two buildings which could be used as shelter for the headquarters and inoperable latrine facilities.

Both sites had recently been used to support religious pilgrims and celebrations. Hundreds of local persons had passed through the area, leaving large amounts of waste and animal carcasses following ceremonial celebrations. Any area selected required extensive cleaning prior to use.

Coordination was made between TUSLOG and the local major to use the new pilgrim site. During the second visit to Silopi on 11 April 91, it was discovered that the Turkish Red Crescent, similar to the U.S. Red Cross, was occupying the new pilgrim site, therefore forcing operations into the old, less desirable site. No time was lost because of the change of locations. The old site was basically a bare base operation and had to be approached in that manner. The support operations and headquarters were established inside of the pilgrim fenced site. A large four lane high banked road divided the operations site from the helicopter parking /refueling and personnel housing



operations.

The Air Force was alerted that basing was required at Silopi for approximately 600 persons. Lt Col Hicks, Commander Prime Beef unit from Bitburg, Germany, was tasked to establish another bare base operation similar to the one his unit established at Batman, Turkey during Proven Force. The units to be supported were elements of the same units supported during Proven Force. This relationship facilitated coordination and improved operations. The problems faced by the Prime Beef units were larger and considerably more difficult than during Proven Force due to the rapidly changing situation and supported population growth. The population grew from the original estimates of 600 to well over 2,000 at Silopi. It was to grow even further and encompass Zakho, Iraq. That operation will not be discussed in this paper other than to note that it did support JTF-B and drew on the already limited assets of the Prime Beef units and Harvest Eagle/ Falcon support packages in the European theater.

The first units into Silopi, 12 April 91, were elements of the 10th SFG, the 7th SOSC, 66th Maint. Bn. and TUSLOG representatives. The HQ, 10th SFG and 66th Maint. Bn. supply and maintenance personnel established operational sites inside the fenced areas of the old pilgrim site. Several ships, diverted from the Persian Gulf to the port of Iskenderun, Turkey off loaded their excess palletized food at Iskenderun. These supplies were shipped via Turkish contract trucks directly to Silopi. The logistical system at this time was push from sea



ports, airfields or local Turkish suppliers directly to Silopi. Meals, Ready-to-Eat(MRE) were shipped in large numbers to Silopi. Silopi was the initial supply stockage build up point for support to the refugee camps by air or truck. Many of the items shipped could not or would not be eaten by the Kurds because of religious, personal taste or cultural reasons. Those items were held at the HSSB for use by the U.S. forces in support of their extensive self-support operations.

Elements of the 66th Maint. Bn. were attempting to organize the arrival of trucks, off loading operations, storage operations, accountability of receipts and shipments to the initial refugee camps by helicopter. Needless to say, this job was far greater than the few dedicated and hard working soldiers from the 66th Maint. Bn. could handle. At this point, requests were sent through the CTF for additional supply handlers and materiel handling equipment(MHE). As time passed, and the rear support base at Iskenderun and Incirlik matured, the transportation systems matured and the ability to push supplies to Silopi increased, however, no additional personnel and equipment were quickly sent to Silopi. This eventually caused a two day back log of vehicles at Silopi attempting to offload items shipped from the ports.

Trucks with food, Harvest Eagle sets, and MHE were all included in the same contracting system and arrived at Silopi to wait in the same line. The local Turkish police were engaged to assist in traffic and vehicle spotting control. Vehicles



containing internal support items and MHE were pulled from the back of the row of waiting trucks. Trucks hauling base support equipment and MHE were pulled out of line and sent directly to the tent city operation for use in further unloading operations. The Turkish drivers did not understand why we were moving vehicles from the back of the line when they were in front of the vehicles moved. This caused several fights between Turkish truckers because they are paid once their vehicles are offloaded and other truckers were getting ahead. The word quickly got back to the Incirlik and Iskenderun loading operations on which items were high priority/turn around.

Because of the off load problems at Silopi, the Turkish truckers staged a two day strike at Incirlik to protest the long waits. The U.S. military was really the only game in town, paid top dollar for truck support, and had a long time requirement. The protest only hurt the Turkish drivers, and gave the operation a chance to get caught up on the offload operations at Silopi. Longest back up of trucks at Silopi was approximately 200.

On 12 April 1991, Lt Col Wisnewski and I traveled from Incirlik to Silopi via Army and Navy helicopter. There were no direct helicopter flights from Incirlik to Silopi. There were no fixed wing facilities at Silopi, however we did have a MAC team survey a road for possible construction of a C-130 runway. The runway cost too much, would take too long to build, therefore was not constructed. Upon arrival at Silopi, work started immediately to establish a refugee support operations center in



the second usable building in the pilgrim complex. LtCol Wisnewski was assigned as the HSSB external support operations officer, taking directions from COL Tangney, CDR, 10th SFG and GEN Potter, JTF-A CDR. The only staff initially available was the existing 66th Maint. Bn. and 7th SOSC personnel that had been on the site for three days. The small staff was reorganized and given assurances that more personnel and equipment would be on the way. LtCol Wisnewski established liaison with the 10th SFG J-3 operations for priority of requirements and support to each of the refugee camps. This system would be maintained through the operation.

The base support operations at Silopi were in a feverish buildup to support JTF-A and the Marine security forces. I will not discuss the base support side of the operation other to say that it was a tremendous operation, taxed all available assets and personnel and a tribute to the skills and dedication of the Prime Beef units. Lt Col Barret Hicks, Prime Beef, was responsible for operations at Batman, Turkey (Proven Force) and again at Silopi, Turkey. The base support eventually grew to Iraq once the security forces arrived and the security zone was established. Once JTF-B was formed, CTF took charge of the base support operations at Silopi. JTF-A still maintained close and continuous contact with the Prime Beef Commander.

During the buildup at Silopi, airdrops of MRE and bulk food was being conducted from Incirlik directly into the refugee camps. The Special Forces teams were brought through Silopi and



then deployed into the refugee camps to organize support and relay requirements through the 10th SFG J-3 to the HSSB support operations cell, headed by LtCol Wisnewski. The requirements would be forwarded via message/daily SITREP to JTF-A J-4 for action with CTF headquarters. Once the initial operation was established at Silopi, I returned to Incirlik to coordinate requirements from Incirlik to Silopi. After several days at headquarters, JTF-A, I returned to Silopi to continue coordination with the newly arriving Marine and British helicopter units flying supply support to the camps.

One of the most difficult portions of the initial operations was the establishment of aircraft refueling operations. There were four U.S. services and several allied countries flying different models of helicopters. It took me several days to locate and organize all players and equipment and establish a safe refueling operation. I will discuss several of the problems and solutions in this operation.

The Air Force in Turkey, owns and operates the refueling equipment in Turkey. Equipment comes from the various bases and in, some cases, war reserves. Ten 50,000 gal., JP-4, collapsible fuel tanks with hoses, pumps and filter/separators, NCOIC and operators were tasked to the Air Force. Fuel berms were dug by Air Force Prime Beef engineers for a total of 8 50,000 gal. tanks. Elements from the 66th. Maint. Bn. had fuels equipment which they brought from home station. This equipment was primarily 500 gal collapsible drums with pumps and were used



to establish MOGAS and DF-2 ground equipment sites. Army personnel were also brought into the pool of POL personnel available to work in the operation. Once the Marines arrived, their requirements were identified, and equipment assets were made available to the operation. Most of the Marines' equipment was designed for forward area refueling operations and carried only 500 gal. drums and pumps/separators. I organized the initial air refueling operation by mission and service as much as possible. The Air Force was responsible for receiving and accounting for fuel and maintaining the Air Force equipment. The Marines were responsible for setting up their 500 gal refueling systems which would be used for the smaller CH-46 and UH-60 helicopter refueling. The Marines were also responsible for establishing the flight patterns, controlling the incoming and outgoing aircraft, and refueling all aircraft. Army personnel assisted the Marines in aircraft refueling. Navy aircraft refuel on different sides than Army aircraft, even though it may be the same basic type aircraft. This caused air traffic control problems initially. Once the pilots became familiar with the traffic patterns and ground controllers, most of those problems were solved. Once the POL operation was established, I turned the operations over to the support operations element of the HSSB. This was considered base support, however the fuel operations were controlled by the support operations section because it was critical to the refugee support therefore was not delegated to base support. Fire trucks from Incirlik were



transported to Silopi for safety support of the refueling operations. At the height of the operation, approximately 400,000 gal. of J-4 were pumped daily from Silopi. There was a constant battle with the Turkish drivers not to smoke near their fuel trucks. Both truck drivers and local farmers had to be kept far away from operations because of the smoking problem. There was no concept of fuel handling safety by the local population. Once this problem was identified, it was controlled very effectively by the military for their own survival. There were no fires or accidents because of these precautions.

As previously discussed, the purpose of Silopi was to provide a support base close to the refugee camps, serviceable by helicopter and truck. Air resupply operations started on the hardstand within the fenced compound, however it quickly grew to alternate sites outside the compound. The SF teams would report the supply requirements to the 10th SFG J-3, who would in turn report them to the HSSB support operations section. Organic requirements for SF team support were filled by the 10th SFG S-4 and refugee support was filled by the support operations section of the HSSB. Coordination would be made with the air liaison cell as to which camps needed what items, when and how much. The air tasking order was cut for the next day to the various allies and U.S. services flying the missions.

Separate piles of supplies for each of the camps were established and pre-rigged, when possible, for sling loading.



The British helicopters were initially the only units that brought cargo nets for external loading. The nets were borrowed from the British for use with the U.S. aircraft. British aircrews were better trained and more familiar with external sling/nets than the U.S. units. Many of the areas were only serviceable with cargo nets and were not appropriate for helicopter landing. Cargo net operations were considerably faster than internal loading. U.S. crews soon caught on to the operations and used the nets as well as their British counterparts. The initial loss of cargo net operations and lack of the U.S. cargo nets slowed the operations down and forced internal loading.

During the supply buildup, priorities of need changed. Initially, the only items available were MRE and food offloaded from SWA ships. As the initial Kurdish population became stabilized from the MREs and the weather started to improve, the need for water and bulk food increased. There was a three day pipeline from port to Silopi. Once a change was made or a requirement cancelled, there was no way to reach into the pipeline and divert or cut off the flow. This caused excess supply problems initially. The problem improved as needs became known, and planners could forecast more than two days out. The system at this point slowly changed from a push system to a pull system.

I again departed Silopi for Incirlik to ensure the supply system at Incirlik and CTF staff understood the situation and



supply requirements. Specific requirements for selected items were now critical. During this time, blankets, plastic sheets and water bottles were in high demand. Several 100,000 shipments of 10 and 20 liter water jugs were purchased from local Turkish vendors. Shovels and handles, separate items in Turkey, were purchased for the Kurds to bury their dead and clean the camps. Several 100,000 shipments of plastic shoes were donated from allied countries for shipment to the Kurds. Contracting officers at Incirlik and Silopi were kept busy with support requirements.

The operations described above were being accomplished with a handful of people from Silopi. By this time, 18 April 1991, it became quite clear to the EUCOM staff that the operations were much larger than could be handled by a make shift support operations section and elements of the 66th Maint. Bn. These people were doing an outstanding job, however the job was much too large for the forces assigned. Once LTG Shalikashvili assumed command of CTF, elements of the 21st Theater Army Support Command were identified to deploy and assume the role of Combined Support Center with the mission to support refugee operations of both JTF-A and JTF-B.

At this point, 18 April 1991, there was a mounting need to supply the most eastern camps in Turkey and Iraq. No roads had yet been opened into the camps. The only access was by fixed wing aircraft or helicopter. The decision was made to establish another HSSB near the high plain city Yuksekova.

The concept was again to build a support base and fly



helicopter support missions from Yuksekova to the camps. Missions would be flown from Silopi to those camps until the second HSSB could be established. The operations at Yuksekova will be discussed in a separate section. Operations were being conducted from Silopi with a second operation planned at Yuksekova when 21st TAACOM was given the mission of support operations for the CTF, JTF-A and JTF-B.

The support operations at Silopi were working toward transitioning from helicopter operations to ground convoy directly to the camps. During this time, elements of the 21st TAACOM, headed by BG Burch, were making their way through Incirlik to Silopi. Several meetings were held between me, representatives of the 21st TAACOM and 7th SOSC to discuss the situation and established support operations transfer operations. Present operations at Silopi and future operations at Yuksekova were discussed. JTF-A was running the support operations from Silopi in addition to the refugee camps operations. The SFG was organized to run the refugee camp operations, not the support/logistical operations. Both operations were being accomplished in spite of a lack of personnel and equipment. It was appropriate that the 21st TAACOM be tasked to run the support operations, a mission well within their structural and doctrinal capabilities. An agreement was reached that the 21st TAACOM would take over all support operations when they were properly staffed and had units in country to accomplish the mission. The point was made that the



operation could be assumed right away because there were already personnel and equipment from USAREUR on the ground at Silopi and soon to be at Yuksekova. The 21st TAACOM staff was reluctant to take over support operations immediately.

During this time, the logistical operations persons and equipment from USAREUR and USAFE were continuing to arrive in country and shipped to LtCol Wisnewski at Silopi. Helicopter resupply operations were in full swing from Silopi to all refugee camps. The transition was made from MRE to bulk food items which consisted of flour, beans, rice, oil, dried fruit, sugar, baby milk, peas, and salt. Clothing and blankets were still being shipped. Great quantities of bottled water were being shipped until the local water sources could be made potable and storage containers available. The 10 and 20 liter water jugs previously discussed were appropriate for a male adult to carry, however the women and children in the Kurdish tribes do most of the work. The water jugs were only half filled because the children could not carry the load. Later shipments of water jugs were of the 10 liter size to allow ease of movement by the user.

Another important logistical transportation note. No U.S. military logistical transport vehicles could be used in Turkey. This insured contracts for the Turkish truckers who were not trading with Iraq or Iran at the time. This caused considerable problems for movement of supplies in and around the HSSBs. Several medium transport companies would have greatly helped the logistical operations because most of the movement of supplies



had to be conducted by forklift, a very inefficient means of moving items over a large area. The Turkish trucks did not work well in this role. The problem was partially solved by the use of Air Force war reserve flat bed trucks, still not sufficient for the level of work required.

The two Marine Landing Support Companies arrived on 30 April 1991, and immediately started their deployment to Silopi to assist in the support operations. The Marines were tasked to perform the mission because the 21st TAACOM had not been tasked nor were there any other units tasked to perform the external logistical support operations. LtCol Bailey, USMC, and his landing support companies were attached to LtCol Wisnewski's logistical support operations at Silopi. The Marine support units would be later subdivided and perform support operations and airfield control missions at several different locations in Turkey and northern Iraq.

The establishment of operations at Silopi was a rushed situation due to the importance of support to the Kurds. There was basically no other way to accomplish this type of operation. Extensive planning took place, however all services and international agencies were trying to get into operations as quickly as possible, therefore causing the expected turbulence. Col Tangney was the senior commander on location at Silopi, which helped in the organization of all agencies. BG Potter also used Silopi as a forward operations base for coordination with officials and as a hub for movement into the Kurdish camps.



Operations grew daily at Silopi as the helicopter operations continued support to the camps. Ground routes were established into the camps serviced from Silopi and contracted vehicles were escorted by U.S. Army units into the camps and Turkish Police units as far as the Iraqi border. The second phase of the operation had started. Considerable quantities of supplies and water were transported from Silopi into the camps. As supplies were drawn down, shipments of bulk goods were shipped directly from Incirlik and Iskenderun to the refugee camps. Direct shipments occurred later in the operation and eliminated double handling of supplies.

As JTF-B began to establish their operations in Zakho, Iraq, much if the initial U.S. and Kurdish support was conducted out of Silopi by the support operations section of JTF-A.

#### HSSB Yuksekova

The HSSB operation at Yuksekova was established to shorten the helicopter routes into the three most eastern refugee camps. The idea was to split helicopter operations, the majority of support to the central camps would come from Silopi and the eastern camps from Yuksekova. The camps in the eastern sector were run by the 2n Battalion, 10th SFG, commanded by LTC J. Bond, headquartered in Yuksekova. Cdr, 2/10th SFG was the base commander for all operations out of Yuksekova. The ground convoy time to Yuksekova was two days. Distance from Incirlik to Yuksekova was over 600 miles. The HSSB preparations at Yuksekova



started of 24 April 1991 with the first helicopter operations into the camps from Yuksekova on 27 April 1991.

BG Potter tasked me to establish support operations at Yuksekova with the SF battalion coordinating refugee requirements and camp operations. Operations were to last as long as the requirement lasted, which was anticipated to be three weeks.

The same theory of support operations was applied at this second HSSB operation. The first stage was helicopter support into the camps followed as quickly as possible by ground convoy from supply source to the camps. There was not the same rush to establish operations at Yuksekova as there was at Silopi. The eastern camps were being supplied out of Silopi, however not as well as desired. This does not minimize the importance of quickly establishing operations. The second HSSB was planned and established according to those plans. The Air Force Prime Beef teams were sent in to establish the second bare base operation. Air Force Security Police (SP) were sent to provide local security for the operation. The SF battalion was deployed on the heels of the Prime Beef teams and assisted in the HSSB layout. Helicopter refuel operations were established on a soccer field in a Turkish military police training school approximately 1 mile from the helicopter supply lift site. The Air Force set up two 50,000 gal JP-4 tanks with two 600 GPM pumps and filter separators. They also provided three operators for the duration of the operation. Fuel requirements were passed from the support operations cell at Yuksekova, through the battalion, to JTF-A



support operations cell at Silopi, to the CTF-J4 at Incirlik. The TUSLOG fuels cell at Incirlik contracted for delivery and recovery of fuel at each site.

In conjunction with the HSSB initial building phase, the support operation supply build up phase started. The concept was to support the eastern most camps from Silopi until Yuksekova was established. Supplies were brought into Yuksekova by Turkish contract vehicles and placed in a vacant bus terminal which was provided to the operation as a temporary storage site. The bus station was approximately 2 miles from the helicopter lift site. The desired method of operation was to have the supplies stored next to the helicopter lift site. Due to the limited storage space at the HSSB base operation, only limited storage was possible. Elements of the 2n, 10th SFG S-4 and support personnel organic to the unit established the initial support operations activities at the bus station.

As the support operations staff was developed and filled by USAREUR troops, the SF battalion passed the mission to the JTF-A support operations cell. The SF battalion provided outstanding support to the support cell and monitored the operation very closely because of the impact it had on refugee support. They also provided personnel from their S-4 section to support the support operations. The SF unit's support included every aspect of assistance and working relationships were good. USAREUR support units should have been deployed sooner than they were to eliminate the soldiers of the SF Bn. having to conduct the



initial support operations. Again, a mission they are not trained for or equipped to perform but did well.

An Army Movements Control Team (MCT) headed by CPT Mercer, was deployed to assist in convoy control in Yuksekova and later used to recon ground routes into the refugee camps. The teams were a great asset however were not equipped with sufficient radios capable of communicating over long distances. The SF Bn sent several radios and operators with the recon units to facilitate adequate communications.

Once operations were started at Yuksekova, U.S. and U.K. helicopters flew alternating missions. The U.K. teams were better prepared for cargo net operations and would lift far greater loads than their U.S. counterparts. The British crews came with organic riggers that assisted the support operations ground crews pre-rig the loads and organize the nets for subsequent operations. The U.S. crews did not come with any nets and depended on the ground crews for all of the expertise. Differences in operational approach will always exist, however the U.K. methods seemed far more efficient and kept the helicopter crews involved in the operations. U.S. crews would be better served for the type operations involved in Provide Comfort by using external loads rather than internal. The units should deploy with the capability to perform both missions, not just internal loading. Nets were borrowed from the U.K. and returned following the operation.

Once sufficient MHE was on location at Yuksekova, offloading



of vehicles at the bus station went smoothly. Because of the long time between request and delivery time, average of 4 days, requirements changed. MREs were only requested for the U.S. personnel, however some enterprising CTF-J4 person sent three 10ton trucks filled to Yuksekova. The TUSLOG contractor cut a return voucher for the driver and returned them to Incirlik rather than off loading. CTF-J4 was reminded that the push supply system was no longer in effect and if that it was not requested, don't send it.

Yuksekova was truly isolated. No direct helicopter flights could be made from Incirlik or Diyarbakir. They all had to go through Silopi due to the distance. Yuksekova had a highway landing strip on the opposite side of town, approximately 5 miles from the HSSB. A MAC liaison cell at Incirlik surveyed the strip and certified it for C-130 operations. This opened another avenue for support into Yuksekova that was not available at Silopi. Critical parts for equipment, mail, replacement personnel, and refugee supplies were flown in on the established flights. The initial flights were established for Monday, Wednesday and Fridays and started on 24 April 1991. The 39th SOW provided Combat Control Teams (CCT) to set up the highway runways and control flight operations for the C-130s. This became too difficult for the Turkish government to coordinate and the flights were eventually reduced to two a week. The flights proved to be a tremendous morale boost and provided the critical logistical items necessary for the operation.



The majority of refugee supplies sent to Yuksekova were bulk in nature and not palletized for movement by MHE. The original request to the CTF-J4 was to send palletized bulk cargo to Yuksekova because there was limited MHE to move bulk items. This had little or no impact on the personnel in charge of sending the items forward. Ships and Turkish suppliers did not have the pallets to supply our needs, so the bulk supplies were shipped by the bag, most of which weighed 80lbs or more. Manual labor was available at Yuksekova, so the TUSLOG contractor hired teams of Turkish and Kurdish workers in Yuksekova, to offload the trucks on arrival. This was a slow method of operation, however the only one available. The bulk supplies were inventoried, stored in the bus station and then prepositioned at the lift site for helicopter transport.

During the first week of helicopter operations, CPT Mercer and his MCT conducted recons of potential routes into the refugee camps. Several routes were determined passable with care. Several routes requiring maintenance were repaired by the Air Force Prime Beef engineers. The Turkish truckers charged by the load and the degree of difficulty of the roads into the camps. Most of the roads were poorly made and extremely dangerous, going straight up and down. Most persons would find it marginal to even walk the routes, much less drive with a loaded truck. Once the ground convoy routes were opened during the third week of operations, all supplies were directed from Incirlik into the specific camps.



During the third week of operations at Yuksekova, it was determined that the operation would stop and support would be conducted from Silopi and Incirlik. The refugees had started moving out of the camps and requirements could be met from Silopi.

The mission accomplished its purpose of moving the supplies closer to the refugees therefore providing quicker and more support during the initial critical days of the operation. The Combined Support Command (CSC) never assumed responsibility for the Yuksekova operation, although it was clearly within their charter to conduct all support operations in support of Provide Comfort. This caused the SF Bn and JTF-A staff to operate the HSSB support operations without the proper logistical staff. The ironic part of this operation was that the personnel brought in to form the HSSB support operations were all individuals tasked from USAREUR units. Once the HSSB Yuksekova operation was terminated, the USAREUR personnel were returned to the CSC for further duties.

The personnel operating the Yuksekova HSSB were fully aware of their mission and responsibilities. The problems existed in obtaining sufficient MHE and support personnel to run a truly efficient operation. These problems were solved through much hard work and coordination. The dedication of the SF Bn and attached persons made the operation a success.



## WAY STATION OPERATIONS

As the final phase of JTF-A's operations, way stations were established at various points by SF and coalition forces to support the Kurds on the numerous routes back to their homes or temporary camps. Way stations were set up on certain routes depending on the length of travel to the final destination. Some routes had no way stations while others had up to four. Way stations were placed at locations near natural water sources and sites appropriate for resupply and vehicle convoy operations. The stations were designed to provide water, food, fuel, medical aid, maintenance and transportation support to the returning Kurds. The sites were designed as temporary stop locations, not another refugee camp. Much effort was placed on this approach. The objective was to provide life support items, but not create a permanent settlement. The desire to go home assisted in this approach.

Many of the way stations were in locations previously occupied by the Iraqi forces. This required coalition forces to clear mines and mark unsafe locations. During this operation, several soldiers were killed and injured due to Iraqi land mines. Many Kurdish refugees, especially children, were injured by mines and unexploded ordnance. The children openly played with anti-personnel mines, sometimes with disastrous results. Much publicity was provided the Kurds by coalition forces on which items were dangerous. This reduced injuries and accidents.



Trucks and busses of all varieties were contracted to haul the Kurds from way stations and camps to temporary refugee camps or home. To assist in this mission, fuel was provided to Iraqi and Turkish drivers on a chit basis. Only enough fuel was provided to go to the camps and return to the way stations. This proved to be a satisfactory way of controlling fuel and drivers.

Maintenance support teams were arranged at the way stations to assist the Kurds with their reclaimed privately owned vehicles. Battery recharging, fuel and oil were available at these locations.

Each way station had medical aid stations to assist the sick and injured. High protein food supplements were provided for children and their mothers. This proved to be highly beneficial.

Members of the combined teams ran all of the various supply points at the different sites. Working relationships among the coalition forces were excellent with a common mission pulling them into a team.

Control of contracted vehicles at each way station was critical to successful movement of the refugees. This was accomplished by assistance from TUSLOG linguists, SF and Kurdish leaders. Movement of refugees went ahead of schedule because of the desire to return home.

Almost all of the women of child bearing age were pregnant. This presented special problems at each of the way stations, particularly when it came to the long, rough truck rides. It was



difficult to tell which Kurds were pregnant. This process of identification could only be done through physical inspection or volunteered information. Most did not come forward with the information for fear of being delayed at the aid stations. This situation caused many births on trucks, busses, and anywhere imaginable.

#### SEVERAL LESSONS LEARNED

During any large scale refugee operation, a logistical organization must be made part of the unit task list and brought into the initial stages of planning. It is easier to disengage logistical units if not required than it is to deploy them when critically needed.

Material handling equipment during refugee operations is critical. There was insufficient MHE in Turkey (war reserve stocks and Air Force base support) to accomplish the mission. Units tasked to deploy were tasked to bring 4,000 lb. and 6,000 lb. Rough Terrain forklifts. Many forklifts were shipped from Italy and Germany in support of operations. The two Marine Landing Support Companies flown from Okinawa brought their forklifts. There should be one person in the support operations center tasked to be "CINC forklift" and control all allocations and movement of such a critical support item.

Ground vehicle mechanics must continue to receive training in internal combustion engine operations and electrical theory.



They were required to repair civilian designed war reserve vehicles taken off base in support of operations. The civilian maintenance personnel could not go off base to repair the vehicles. These vehicles were not supposed to leave the base, or at most, be sent to another air base. The military mechanics did an outstanding job with limited repair parts.

At least one medium truck company should have been deployed for operations at Silopi. This would have allowed movement of supplies in and around at Silopi without using Turkish trucks and excessive use of forklifts to move supplies between sites.

Continued joint training and use of inter-service support for common supply items is critical. The dominant user concept was used in Turkey however exceeded the Air Force capability to provide POL support equipment, off base administrative vehicles and MHE. Common logistical support should be given to one service during joint operations, whenever possible, to eliminate duplication of effort and resources.

Aircraft refueling operations should be the same for all U.S. services. The Marines and Army personnel used the same standards and the Air Force used another for filter separation and fuel sampling. This caused some initial problems until the quality of fuel could be determined. Another problem was to recirculate or not recirculate the fuel prior to operations. Air Force does not require recirculation and they owned and ran the receipt and storage of POL. Additional hose was obtained from the Air Force and the fuel was recirculated. Joint operations will be the norm



and where systems and equipment meet, there must be commonality. Once recirculation was initiated, the Marine and Army aviators were confident of fuel quality.

Communications during Provide Comfort were excellent for JTF-A because of the special operations capabilities and 1st Combat Communications unit (Air Force) initially deployed. Long range communications were essential for the success of the operation.

#### FINAL COMMENTS ON PROVIDE COMFORT

There was no doubt that Provide Comfort was a logistical operation that required combat support for security. The U.S. and Coalition forces engaged in the operation were the only assets capable of providing the initial life sustaining support to the Kurds. The other agencies such as the Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, and U.N. were clearly not in the position or had the capability in aircraft or personnel to accomplish the mission. As the coalition developed its operation, the U.N. agencies were brought in to assume responsibility for support operations of the refugees. During the time JTF-A was operational, the U. N. was only slightly involved in refugee support. As time passed, more U. N. agency support was available.

The working relationships between joint and combined forces was excellent. The joint nature of support operations was truly a mixing and matching of all systems. It was obvious that much



work had been done at the DoD level for interoperability of POL equipment and capabilities. Commonality of equipment within services greatly enhances mission performance. One area that still requires work in commonality is in MHE. Maintenance and repair parts for the various types of equipment is difficult and hampers a joint operation.

BG Potter, JTF-A Commander, understood the logistical requirements and allowed his staff to use all available means to establish support operations for the refugee camps. Once the Kurds were safely out on the mountain camps and back in their home towns or temporary camps, JTF-A's mission was complete. Redeployment operations started the first of June and were completed by 17 June 1991.